



the fellowship message

“Proclaiming freedom for the captives.” ISAIAH 61

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A Life Changed by Derek Hines

“Your love’s too good to leave me here...”

One of my favorite songs from the worship band Hillsong United is called “As You Find Me”. It’s a powerful anthem that proclaims God’s unchanging and never-ending love, a love that meets people where they are, regardless of the choices they’ve made or the mess they find themselves in.

I think this song resonates with me because that was not my experience growing up. For me, love always felt conditional and not something that could be depended on, especially in times when I found myself in a mess of my own making. In retrospect, I can see the strict upbringing of my parents was their way of instilling in me a strong moral compass and, ultimately, saving me from the painful consequences of sin.

Unfortunately, my inability to consistently live up to the standard set for me, and the subsequent punishment, caused a relational break between my parents and me. I began to view them, my dad especially, only as a source of discipline, and not people I could turn to for help. From a young age, I remember feeling very alone, like I didn’t belong in my family. Compounding this feeling of isolation were the difficulties I had in creating long-lasting friendships with my peers. I was very shy as a kid, and it took me a long time to make friends. My family also moved a lot when I was young, and I switched schools frequently. It seemed that any time I started to get connected and make friends, my life would be uprooted, and I would have to start the process all over again. Looking back on my early childhood, I remember so vividly just wanting to have a friend I could fit in with and feel like I belonged with.

Then puberty happened. The desire for a relationship with my peers was still there, but so was a flood of hormones. I began to notice that my desire for connection now had a sexual component to it. At the time, I didn’t know how to describe how I was feeling. My family didn’t talk about sex much in general and particularly not about homosexuality. However, growing up in the church, I knew that what I was feeling was wrong and not what God had for me. Without having anyone to confide in, I tried to hide the feelings away as much as I could, hoping and praying that one day they would just go away.

Once I got to college I started dating, convinced that if I could just find the right woman that all my desires for intimacy with men would go away. However, it didn’t work—none of the women I dated could fix the relational deficit I had with my own gender. So, even as I was in relationships with women, I found myself falling more and more into pornography and chatting with guys online. It



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was one of these online relationships that eventually led to my first sexual experience with a man. I remember leaving that encounter absolutely wrecked. Even though I inherently knew it was wrong, there was a part of me that had really hoped hooking up with a man would satisfy my relational needs. It didn't. In fact, I left feeling lonelier and more ashamed than ever before. I was numb for weeks. Eventually, the fog cleared, and I was forced to come to terms with my feelings, forced to admit that things weren't going to somehow change on their own.

Looking for hope, I began to confide in others how I was feeling and my desire for things to be different. In this season of desperation, I got involved with Portland Fellowship by joining the Reach Truth online discipleship program. It was an amazing experience! I finally began to understand where my same-sex attraction was coming from. As I worked through the lessons, I could feel God beginning to peel back and heal the relational pain I had been carrying around and hiding for so long. I began to experience what is promised in 2 Corinthians 2:18, which says, *"And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image."* I began to feel a freedom over my desires that I never felt possible.

At the same time, I know that I hadn't yet fully surrendered to God's working in my life. I wanted my attractions to change, but I wasn't all that interested in doing the hard work of fully entering the healing process. I had kept so much of my life hidden away for so long that it seemed easier to keep my innermost thoughts and feelings a secret. God, however, promises in Philippians 1:6 that, *"...he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion."* And so, while I wasn't ready to continue the healing process, I know that God was still pursuing me, ready to continue the work He started.

Sadly, it took another sexual encounter with a man to fully awaken me to my need for continued healing and transformation. This encounter also opened my eyes to see how much my inner sin could hurt someone. I had begun

dating a woman who I liked very much, and knew if I admitted what I had done that she would break up with me. So, I reverted to my old unhealthy habits, and kept it a secret for almost a year. By this point our relationship had progressed and we were talking about marriage, but before I proposed, I knew I had to come clean. I was afraid that if I didn't, if I got away with being unfaithful once, that it would happen again. So, one day after dinner I told her what I had done. It was the hardest moment of my life; I saw in her eyes the depth of pain that my sin had caused. When she left that night, I truly didn't know if I would ever see her again.



By God's grace alone she chose to stay in relationship with me, believing—even when I didn't—in God's transforming power. Humbled, I came back to PF and joined Taking Back Ground, ready to resume the healing that God had previously begun. It was a challenging two years, spent unpacking past hurt and finally admitting and confessing secret areas of sin. I had kept my same-sex attraction

hidden away for so many years that it felt freeing to finally be able to share my struggles with like-minded individuals. I began to recognize the importance of vulnerability and open-handedly surrendering the false identities and lies I had believed. Time and time again I felt God's grace meet me in my pain and confusion, reminding me that truly nothing could separate me from His love. (*Romans 8:39*)

Halfway through my time at TBG, my girlfriend and I were married on a sunny summer afternoon on the Oregon Coast. Kati and I have now been married for over ten years, and we are parents to two wonderful boys who remind me constantly of God's great love and patience for His children. Today, I also get to serve on the PF Board of Directors and am reminded, time and time again, of God's transforming love that meets people right where they are.

Thinking back to the song "As You Find Me", I'm reminded of one specific line that sums up so much of my journey: *"Your love's too good to leave me here"*. I'll be the first to admit that I am still a work in progress, but I can also say, by God's grace, that I am not the man I used to be. God met me in my brokenness and has truly changed my life.

A Year of Hope (Part 5 of 6): Bringing Hope for the Church by Leah King

In this six-part series, we are highlighting different parts of Portland Fellowship that offer hope for healing and relational wholeness in Jesus Christ. For context, please read the previous parts: www.portlandfellowship.com/articles/hope.pdf

Sexual brokenness has become normal in our society. Our world has tarnished the concepts of gender and sexuality, which were made in God's image (*Gen 1:27*). This twisting of God's design is no longer hidden, but has been given a platform, where embracing lies is "bravery". We see the nuclear family breaking down, truth being treated as subjective, and people labeling sinful behaviors and broken identities as "diversity". The church has found herself in a pickle regarding how to respond.

Families in our congregations are crying for help with how to react to their children when they "come out" (often learning that their child's school knew about the identity struggle, but weren't legally obligated to tell). Churches are navigating conversations around taking a biblical stance on sexuality and gender, and if they do, many times they don't know how to communicate that effectively. Pastors are asking, "Should we allow trans-identified people and gay couples in our congregation? What does discipleship look like regarding this?"

I was recently speaking at a church where there was a person who presented as female. This person confessed that he recently learned he was born male. His mother chose to raise him female. He was now an adult trying to figure out if God wanted him to continue as a female, or to start living as a male. Where was he looking for help? The church. However, this wasn't just new territory for the man, but also new territory for the church.

Many churches at this point are at a loss on what to do. This is no longer a matter of "getting ahead of the game", per say, but rather how not to get lost in what is already happening. If not already drowning, churches are barely keeping their heads above water as they tread through the chaos of a sexually confused world.

The good news for the church of today is that, just as Jesus has never left us without help or hope, He has made a way for churches to navigate these times: parachurch ministries. The prefix "para" means "beside" or "alongside of", so parachurch ministries work "alongside of the church". As a parachurch ministry, Portland Fellowship comes alongside the local church to help navigate the confusion of sexual fluidity. You see, the problem is not that the local church isn't aware of what is going on, but rather, that she has not been equipped to care for such sin struggles (to the extent that they need to be). Portland Fellowship does just that.

Portland Fellowship exists to proclaim freedom for the captives (*Isaiah 61*). This is not a one-person job, but like a body, it's a job that takes many parts to function. Many people know that PF offers in-house support to those seeking freedom from unwanted sexual behaviors, and support their families as well. However, many aren't aware that we also help equip the local church by teaching and training pastors and leaders. We provide resources that churches can use to disciple those in their congregation wrestling with unwanted same-sex attraction and gender confusion. PF also provides counsel on how to hold to biblical truth as a church, while still providing space for people to seek Jesus without condemnation for what they struggle with.

Portland Fellowship is a beacon of hope for the church because it doesn't leave people at a "Prayer is all we can do!" stance; instead, along with prayer and discipleship in biblical truths about sexuality and gender, we also provide programs that look at past hurts, to see where these struggles have come from. This offers strugglers a path forward to new life and identity in Christ, where He restores us to wholeness.

Utilizing ministries like Portland Fellowship provides the church a foundation to stand in the tension of being in the sexually-confused world, and yet not of it. I truly believe the Lord has prepared PF to encourage churches and equip the saints for such a time as this. If your church has found itself stuck in the middle of navigating how to respond to sexual fluidity, while also holding fast to the truth of Scripture, you can reach out to Portland Fellowship for any support you need. We would be happy to come alongside your church leaders and community in providing clarity, training, and guidance for walking with those with unwanted sexual behaviors, and how to navigate being the church in these confusing times. "So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people...so that the body of Christ may be built up..." —*Ephesians 4:11-12*



September - October Calendar & Services

september 13

In-Person Hope Group

For friends & Family of gay & trans-identified loved ones. Join us for dinner, an encouraging testimony, and time for sharing & prayer.
6:30 p.m. PST

www.portlandfellowship.com/rsvp.php

september 17, 24

PF Leadership Training

Volunteer leaders prepare for this year's Taking Back Ground and Hope Group programs.
6-8 p.m.

tuesdays in october

Taking Back Ground

PF's intensive discipleship program for men and women struggling with unwanted same-sex attraction. Group for wives and fiancées also.
*For both Zoom and in-house.
6-8:30 p.m.

tuesdays in october

Hope Group

Discipleship series for friends & family of gay or trans-identifying loved ones.
*For both Zoom and in-house.
6-8 p.m.

Follow us!

Get updates and inspirational resources on social media.

*Facebook & Instagram:

@portlandfellowship

*Twitter: @PTLDFellowship

Additional Updates:

www.portlandfellowship.com

Speakers, counseling and support for youth

can be set up through the office.

New Book: *Across the Kitchen Table: Talking About Trans with Your Teen*



As confusion over gender increases in our culture, and even in our churches, it can feel overwhelming trying to discern how to respond with both truth and grace. Our youth and young adults are statistically experiencing this confusion in greater numbers than adults. If transgender issues haven't impacted your family yet, they very likely will soon. As Believers, how should we respond? Are we ready for these conversations?

If you are seeking to help a gender struggler, approach the transgender phenomena from a deeply Biblical perspective, and engage with the teens you love, then this book is for you. *Across the Kitchen Table: Talking About Trans with Your Teen* is the latest book by Dr. Sam A. Andreades. Dr. Andreades has been a minister for over twenty years, pastoring churches in New York City and rural Pennsylvania. In 2008, he founded Higher Ground, a ministry of Christian discipleship serving those with unwanted same-sex attraction.

Pastor Andreades has also authored several books designed to help people build a theology of gender. He has counseled scores of couples on marriage and relationships, as well as giving numerous seminars around the country on the Gift of Gender as presented by the Bible.

- To order *Across the Kitchen Table*:
<https://a.co/d/hmQrjYv>
- To learn more, visit Pastor Andreades' website: www.AffirmingGender.com



The Fellowship Message is a monthly publication of Portland Fellowship, a ministry proclaiming freedom from homosexuality through the power of Jesus Christ.

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OPEN NOW! 2024-25 **Discipleship Programs**

- Tuesdays 6-8:30pm PST
- October 2024 - May 2025
- Both In-Person & on Zoom



For Christians struggling
with unwanted same-sex
attraction/ gender
confusion



For Friends & Family of
gay/ trans—identified
loved ones



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